

CLAIMS

I Claim:

- 5 1. A method for issuing a notice to a product comprising the steps of:
 accepting a product identifier;
 generating a signal message according to the product identifier; and
 conveying the signal message to the product.

- 10 2. The method of Claim 1 wherein accepting a product identifier comprises
 accepting one or more of a stock keeping unit number, a serial number, a lot
 code and a date code.

- 15 3. The method of Claim 1 wherein generating a signal message comprises
 generating a signal message that includes the product identifier.

- 20 4. The method of Claim 1 wherein generating a signal message comprises:
 determining a digital identification number associated with the product
 identifier; and
 including the digital identification number in a signal message.

- 25 5. The method of Claim 1 wherein conveying the signal message to the product
 comprises:
 determining a target product group;
 determining a communications channel according to the target product
 group; and
 conveying the signal message to the communications channel.

6. The method of Claim 5 wherein determining a communications channel comprises determining on one or more of a carrier signal frequency, a numeric sequence, a network address and a telephone number for a target product group.

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7. The method of Claim 1 wherein conveying the signal message to the product comprises:
determining a conveyance time slot associated with the product; and
conveying the signal message to the communications channel during the
time slot on a periodic basis.

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8. The method of Claim 1 further comprising conveying a time beacon to the product.

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9. A method for issuing a notice to a product comprising the steps of:
accepting a product identifier;
determining a communications channel to a product;
generating a signal message; and
conveying the signal message to the communications channel.

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10. The method of Claim 9 wherein accepting a product identifier comprises
accepting one or more of a stock keeping unit number, a serial number, a lot code and a date code.

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11. The method of Claim 9 wherein determining a communications channel comprises determining one or more of a carrier signal frequency, pseudo random number sequence, a network address and a telephone number.

12. The method of Claim 9 wherein generating a signal message comprises generating a signal message that includes the product identifier.
13. The method of Claim 9 wherein generating a signal message comprises:
 - 5 determining a digital identification number associated with the product identifier; and
 - including the digital identification number in a signal message.
14. The method of Claim 9 wherein conveying the signal message to the communications channel comprises conveying the signal message to at least one of a wired communication medium and a wireless communications medium.
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15. The method of Claim 9 wherein conveying the signal message to the communications channel comprises conveying the signal message to at least one of a cable television distribution system, a utility power distribution system and a switched telephone network.
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16. The method of Claim 9 wherein conveying the signal message to the communications channel comprises:
 - 20 determining a conveyance time slot associated with the product; and
 - conveying the signal message to the communications channel during the time slot.
- 25 17. The method of Claim 9 wherein conveying the signal message to the communications channel comprises conveying the signal message to the communications channel on a periodic basis.

18. The method of Claim 9 further comprising conveying a time beacon to the communications channel.
19. The method of Claim 9 further comprising receiving an acknowledgement of
5 the signal message from the product.
20. An apparatus for conveying a notice to a product comprising:
product identification unit that accepts a product identifier;
signal generator that is capable of generating a signal message according
10 to the product identifier; and
signal transmitter that is capable of conveying the signal message to the
product.
21. The apparatus of Claim 20 wherein the product identification unit is capable of
15 accepting one or more of a stock keeping unit number, a serial number, a lot
code and a date code.
22. The apparatus of Claim 20 wherein the signal generator generates a signal
message based that includes the product identifier.
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23. The apparatus of Claim 20 wherein the signal generator:
determines or receives a digital identification number associated with the
product identifier; and
generates a signal message that includes the digital identification number.
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24. The apparatus of Claim 20 wherein the signal transmitter comprises:
channel indicator receiver capable of receiving a channel indicator; and
interface wherein the signal transmitter dispatches to the interface a signal
message directed according to the channel indicator.

25. The apparatus of Claim 24 wherein the interface comprises of at least one of a radio frequency interface, a spread-spectrum interface, a network interface, a telephone interface, and a cellular telephone interface.

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26. The apparatus of Claim 20 wherein the signal transmitter is capable of conveying the signal message to the product during a particular time slot.

10 27. The apparatus of Claim 20 wherein the signal transmitter is capable of conveying the signal message to the product on a periodic basis.

28. The apparatus of Claim 20 wherein the signal transmitter is capable of conveying a time beacon to the product.

15 29. An apparatus for conveying a notice to a product comprising:
product identification unit that accepts a product identifier;
communications interface configurable according to the product identifier;
and
signal generator that generates a signal message according to the product
20 identifier and conveys the signal message to the communications channel.

30. The apparatus of Claim 29 wherein the product identification unit accepts a product identifier in at least one of the formats including a stock keeping unit number, a serial number, a lot code and a date code.

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31. The apparatus of Claim 29 wherein the communications interface is configurable according to at least one of a carrier signal identifier, pseudo random number sequence, a network address and a telephone number.

32. The apparatus of Claim 29 wherein signal generator generates a signal message that includes the product identifier.

33. The apparatus of Claim 20 wherein the signal generator:

5 determines or receives a digital identification number associated with the product identifier; and
generates a signal message that includes the digital identification number.

34. The apparatus of Claim 29 wherein the communications interface comprises
10 at least one of a wired and a wireless interface.

35. The apparatus of Claim 29 wherein the communications interface comprises
at least one of a cable television interface, a utility power interface and a
switched telephone network interface.

15 36. The apparatus of Claim 29 wherein the communications interface further
comprises a time-slot unit that determines or receives a time-slot associated
with the product and also conveys the signal message to the product during
the determined time-slot.

20 37. The apparatus of Claim 29 wherein the signal generator is capable of
conveying the signal message to the communications channel on a periodic
basis.

25 38. The apparatus of Claim 29 wherein the signal generator is capable of
conveying a time beacon message to communications channel.

39. The apparatus of Claim 29 wherein the signal generator is capable of
recording an acknowledgement from the product.